



INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

2320 LA BRANCH STREET, RM 1107, HOUSTON, TX

713-425-2440

Chair's Corner



On May 15, 2017, we recognized 75 nominees from a variety of Federal agencies throughout the larger Houston area as our Public Service Recognition Week Ceremony. I want to thank Gloria Gibson-White and Natalie Saiz for the many hours of

organization, coordination and recruitment of our selection committee; my staff for developing the nice program for the event; and Todd Consolini, Houston FEB Vice Chair for opening our ceremony. A list of the 27 finalists are provided on page 2 of this newsletter, with the winners identified in each category. Above all else, I want to thank the Federal Leaders in Houston who took the time to nominate your high performers for recognition! I can't wait until next year, when we will do it even bigger and better!

Our **Leadership FEB** class has begun! We organized a "PREVIEW" that was open to all interested Federal employees in April; and the program began in May with the first formal forum. This month they will continue with their monthly forums, visiting agencies and learning "best practices and lessons learned" from various agencies that host our group each

month. I want to personally thank the Federal Agencies that have agreed to host our group this year. So far they have visited the Department of State, Small Business Administration; Department of Labor, Wage & Hour; Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; and Maritime Safety. In the following months, they will visit the Passport Agency, TIGTA, NASA, the Federal Detention Center, Federal Protective Service, Transportation Security Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the EPA and a couple more to be confirmed!

While we hosted a one-day **Pre-Retirement training** in May, our next is scheduled in August, with one day specified for each of the Retirement Systems. *If you register, you also need to indicate if you are covered by a special retirement provision such as fire fighter, law enforcement or air traffic control.* These training days are well worth the time investment and the critiques we receive have told the story that we need to continue these training days!

I hope to see you at one of our scheduled events!

Tim Jeffcoat, Chairman

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2017 Houston FEB Awards Ceremony—27 Finalists

Administrative Excellence

Fatima I. Bonilla	USCG
Desedra McGinnis	IRS/SB/SE
Clareesa Threatt	DHS/ICE/ERO

Winner: Fatima Bonilla with the US Coast Guard!

Community Service

Angela Olstad	NASA - JSC
Deborah S. Rambis	IRS/SB/SE
Arthur J. White	IRS

Winner: Deborah Rambis with IRS!

Customer Service

Jaren Drummond	VA/VBA/VSC
Kristi Johnston	VA Regional Office
Jonathan Peterson	DHS/USCIS

Winner: Jaren Drummond with VBA!

Employee with a Disability

Raymond Bautista	EEOC
Matthew Cavazos	IRS
Levin James Tibbetts	VARO

Winner: Levin Tibbetts with the VA Regional Office!

Inter-Agency Collaboration

Gisela Moreno & Tyrone Wright	NASA - JSC
Houston Alternatives to Detention (ATD)	DHS/ICE
Super Bowl 51 Federal Coordination Team (FCT) - Sean McElroy	DHS
Houston Money Laundering Initiative	DHS

Winner: Houston Money Laundering Initiative with DHS!

Leadership Excellence

Rebecca Hanks	DOL/WHD
Matthew W. Kellison	USCG
Kathy J. Robbins	IRS/LB&I

Winner: Kathy Robbins with IRS!

Legal/Law Enforcement

James Emmerson	DEA
Sam Johnson	TIGTA
James E. Semrick	DEA

Winner: James Semrick with DEA!

Team Excellence

Federal Protective Service Team of Houston	FPS
Public Contact Team	VA
Major Incurred Cost Team	DCAA
Team TSA-IAH	TSA
Logistics & Removals	DHS/ICE/ERO

Winner: Federal Protective Service Team of Houston!



We applaud the efforts and accomplishments of every nominee for this year's Awards Ceremony! Listed on this page are only the 27 Finalists from a total of 75 nominations with only ONE winner named in each category.

Beating Business Jargon, Banish Obscure and Confusing Language

The business world is overflowing with unnecessary jargon – words that do more to confuse co-workers and customers than to help them.

Here are three examples: "punch a puppy" (do a bad thing that's good for business); "peel the onion" (look at an issue in detail); and "take a thought shower" (come up with some ideas).

The words may be familiar, but the phrases ask more questions than they answer. And you risk alienating your team members, or losing their good will, if your choice of words is baffling or annoying. This is especially true when you're trying to give them important information.

But jargon is not all bad. Technical language can actually be an aid to good communication, if it is delivered in the right setting and to the right people. The important thing is to know your audience and to know the difference between good and bad jargon.

In this article, we'll examine how jargon can reduce the clarity of your communication, and how it can affect your authority as a leader. We'll look at ways to stamp out the wrong kind of jargon, but also how to use the right kind effectively... when it is appropriate.

What is Jargon?

The [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#) is a good starting point for understanding what jargon is, because it offers two definitions that immediately help us to distinguish between good and bad jargon. The first is, "confused unintelligible language," and the second is, "the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of a special activity or group."

Business jargon that comes under the first definition is the kind that is criticized. It might be just slightly irritating: "Let's run that up the flagpole, and see if anyone salutes," for instance. But, why not simply say, "Let's try this out and see what people think"? Sometimes the words just sound silly: "Let's open the kimono on that." Let's not. Let's just tell people about it.

However, technical terms, or "the right kind of jargon," can quickly and effectively explain a specific activity or meaning to a specialized audience. The key here is knowing who you are delivering the message to. A group of project managers would greet words such as [agile](#), [sprint](#) and [scrum](#) with a collective nod. An audience of people with no



knowledge of project management, on the other hand, would likely be left scratching their heads.

But, using specialist jargon or language, is appropriate – or even preferable – as long as you match your audience's level of knowledge. This is because, in one short word or phrase, you can convey a complex concept or a technical process to them quickly and efficiently.

However, it is vital that you prepare the right words for the right people, and that you don't allow your message to become muddled.

Five Ways That Bad Jargon Hinders Good Communication

It excludes people. Jargon can be a code that people use to impress others or to deliberately make the point that they are part of "the club." But it is baffling and alienating to those who don't know. These people can be made to feel foolish or part of an "[out-group](#)" for no good reason.

It is complex. You risk sounding pompous by over-complicating your language. For instance, you could say "contact" rather than "reach out to," or "analyze" rather than "drill down." And always opt for simplicity, especially for an audience of non-experts.

It can be confusing. You can lose your team members' attention, especially if you're working globally or remotely, or if your team is culturally or linguistically [diverse](#).

It may be misleading. Saying, "Our exploratory research points to a range of balanced options going forward, and we're currently assimilating the data-sets as a priority to create some top-line metrics," may seem like a smart way to avoid saying, "Sorry, I don't yet know." But making your communications unclear in this way is unlikely to enhance your reputation or credibility.

It can be undermining. If you use jargon in this way, you risk losing your power or authority within your team by failing to communicate accessibly and understandably. People will likely detect you're hiding behind a screen of tortuous technical terms. But, if they do understand what you're saying, and feel that they can trust your words, it will likely create a more [collaborative](#) working environment and better relationships.

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/ beating-jargon.htm?utm_source=nl&utm_campaign=newclicktest&utm_medium=email&utm_content=mb1

5 Critical Competencies for Public Administration Leadership

The work of city and county managers is complex and dynamic – complex due to the many challenges facing local governments across the country and dynamic due to the dizzying changes impacting communities and their citizens. These challenges and changes come at a time when public confidence in elected officials remains historically low (Pew Research Center, 2015). Given these various factors, city and county managers have both an opportunity and obligation to build trust with their various constituents through the practice of effective leadership.

There is much written about leadership, and this blog in particular provides an excellent venue for some of the contemporary thinking and writing on the subject. Based on our work in the Center for Organizational Development and Leadership at Rutgers University, we have come to define leadership as a process of social influence that is shaped by verbal and nonverbal

communication and co-constructed between leaders and followers (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). This definition, along with many other similar definitions, highlights the importance of both the leader and the follower in shaping the process of

leadership. Put another way, the follower is what makes leadership possible, and leaders must regularly assess the impact of their behaviors on the various followers to whom one represents.

As we consider the complex and dynamic context facing city and county managers, Brent Ruben's (2012) leadership competencies scorecard provides a useful overview of the knowledge and skills required for effective leadership during this important moment. This scorecard is the result of Ruben's synthesis of the extensive professional literature on leadership, leading him to develop a diverse portfolio of requisite competencies based on five broad areas:

- 1) analytic competencies
- 2) personal competencies

- 3) communication competencies
- 4) organizational competencies
- 5) positional competencies

Each of these broad competency areas encompasses a number of themes, as illustrated in the figure below. As Ruben describes these broad and expansive competencies, he suggests that the many challenges that leaders face require a diverse portfolio of knowledge and skills, "and the ability to analyze situations and employ those competencies as needed".

Leadership involves a combination of both "vertical" competencies – the knowledge and skills needed to lead that are specific to one's role as a local government official – and "horizontal" competencies – the generic knowledge and skills that cut across these competency areas. For example, your role as a public administrator likely requires an intimate understanding of local issues, but your success as a

leader also very much hinges upon your analytical problem-solving skills, your organizational abilities, your enthusiasm for public service, and your effectiveness in communicating with the diverse constituents in your community.

As you think about your own leadership effectiveness, take time to review the various competency areas in the scorecard, and consider in which of these areas you are most and least proficient. As will be addressed in a future blog post, your development as a leader calls for both a deep self-awareness and an intentional commitment to improvement.

LSC 2.0: Five Major Competency Themes, Each Including a Number of Specific Competency Areas

Analytic	Personal	Organizational	Positional	Communication
Self-Assessment	Character, Personal Values, and Ethics	Vision-Setting, Strategy Development, Goal-Setting	Education	Credibility and Trust
Problem-Definition	Cognitive Ability and Creativity	Management and Supervision	Experience	Influence and Persuasion
Stakeholder Analysis	Enthusiasm	Information/Knowledge Management and Boundary Spanning	Expertise	Interpersonal and Group Relations, and Team Building
Systems/Organizational Analysis	High Standards	Technological Capability	Knowledge of Sector	Listening, Attention, Questioning, and Learning
Analysis of Technology to Support Leadership	Personal Conviction and Persistence	Collaborative Decision Making and Empowerment	Knowledge of Organization	Writing and Public Speaking
Problem-Solving	Self-Discipline and Self-Confidence	Teaching and Coaching	Familiarity with Work	Diversity and Intercultural Relations
Review and Analysis of Results	Role Modeling	Change, Risk, and Crisis Management	Professional Involvement	Facilitation, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution

RALPH A. GIGLIOTTI, PHD IS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE IS ALSO A PART-TIME LECTURER IN COMMUNICATION

[http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/blogs/blogpost/5532/5 Critical Competencies for Public Administration Leadership](http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/blogs/blogpost/5532/5%20Critical%20Competencies%20for%20Public%20Administration%20Leadership)

WHERE THE PATH ENDS AND THE FOREST BEGINS

The only way to change your future is to step off the path and step into the forest. No one is going to do it for you.

A fixed mindset congeals your future in the past.

The great tragedy of leadership is being so busy leading that you neglect your own development.

Where the path ends and the forest begins:

#1. Concept versus reality: The concept of growth is easier than the reality.

Growth requires:

1. Not knowing. *There's nowhere to grow if you already know.*
2. Making mistakes. Success solidifies who you are. Failure changes you.
3. Feeling like an impostor. You have to try on new behaviors to ignite growth.

We never grow until we do something we've never done.

#2. Relationship: You're where you are today because you let someone change your leadership.

The people who change us:

1. Often reach out to us first. We don't find them. They find us. Be watchful and open.
2. Seek our best interests. The people who change us aren't self-serving.
3. Speak uncomfortable truths. You wouldn't intentionally hit yourself in the face, but it's not unusual for leaders to sincerely hinder their own progress.

You grow in community. Growth always includes quiet reflection, but long-term isolation strangles your future.

1. Hang with people who are growing.
2. Say yes to someone who pushes you into discomfort. Growth results from engaging in new activities *with someone*. *You behave your way into the leader you hope to become.*
3. Evaluate experiences after, not during. Don't judge quickly. Effective reflection and evaluation take time.

#3. Gaps: Growth happens in the gap between achievement and aspiration.

Most leaders want to grow, but not everyone wants to step from the known into the unknown.

Growth occurs where the path ends and the forest begins. You can't grow and cling to the comfort of the status quo.



<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2017/04/27/where-the-path-ends-and-the-forest-begins/>

Coaching Done Right—4 Steps that Set People Up for Success

It's important to ensure that people who are about to receive coaching are set up for success. When using coaching as a development methodology, an experienced coach will take four steps to make sure the engagement has the best chance to achieve desired outcomes. Here's what to look for in the coaching interactions you set up.

Step 1: What is the goal? What outcomes do you want coaching to achieve? Is a behavior change required? Is a shift in thinking necessary? What exactly has to change? Being specific about outcomes is surprisingly hard for people. Earlier this year, we worked with an organizational sponsor to set up coaching for an executive. When we asked the desired outcome, the sponsor replied, "I'll know it when I see it." Needless to say, the target was constantly changing. Coaching is an exploratory process but it must be done with a clear target in mind.

Step 2: Prepare the person to be coached. This includes going over a set of expectations prior to the launch of coaching. Be sure to include expectations around feedback. Share that requests for behavior change will be made in a clear and specific manner along with discussions that ensure feedback is understood and acted upon. Discuss how to create the space for the person being coached to reflect how they might best use coaching and what outcomes they want to achieve.

Step 3: Stick with it. Discuss follow-up.

Organizations often expect overnight results. Coaching does not replace the need for internal organizational support—in other words, the manager of the person being coached is not off the hook. In fact, this is a time for the manager to step up, lean in, and follow through. Set up a plan to recognize and acknowledge the growth of the coachee and then support that growth with positive and specific feedback.

Step 4: Gather success stories. Ensure



your coaching interventions have some method or process to capture the successes brought about by coaching. Use a post-coaching interview process to capture the changes made and their impact on not only the person being

coached but also those around her. Help the coachee to link those successes to business strategies or imperatives. Document the successes and leverage them as a way to influence others to take advantage of coaching.

Coaching will have an impact on people who engage in the process. Careful thought, planning, and follow-through can dramatically increase the effectiveness of coaching, which will pay off a hundred fold in your organization.

About the Author



Patricia Overland is a Coaching Solutions Partner with The Ken Blanchard Companies' Coaching Services team. Since 2000, Blanchard's 150 coaches have worked with over 14,500 individuals in more than 250 companies throughout the world. Learn more

at [Blanchard Coaching Services](#). And check out Coaching Tuesday every week at Blanchard Leader Chat for ideas, research, and inspirations from the world of executive coaching.

THE PUZZLE WITHOUT THE COVER

Leading is like working on a puzzle without the cover. In turbulent times, throw three puzzles in the same pile. In crisis, hide the edges.

Certainty about the future is illusion.

At best, leaders experience a life of ambiguity, punctuated with guiding moments of clarity.

The picture:

Mission, vision, and values are the colors of your future.

1. Mission: What value do you bring to others? *A mission that centers on your organization is only compelling to you.*
2. Vision: Where are you going?
3. Values: What behaviors best achieve mission and vision? Choose three to five behaviors that you'll always exemplify, regardless of the situation.

Mission, vision, and values don't predict the future. They make it.

Stability:

3 factors of stability when the picture is missing:

#1. Character.

Successfully putting the leadership puzzle together is about character, more than the puzzle. *When the cover is lost, it's all about the person putting the puzzle together.* Think about patience, grit, courage, curiosity, and openness.

Think who before what.

#2. Relationships.

The people around you are the biggest factor of success. This is especially true when the

puzzle is mixed up and the box top is lost.

Surround yourself with people who:

1. Believe in the mission, embrace the vision, and exemplify your values. *Invite believers to join. Ignore or reject the rest.*
2. Honor each

other's strengths.

3. Address adversity optimistically.
4. Speak with kind candor, courageous vulnerability, and forward-facing curiosity.

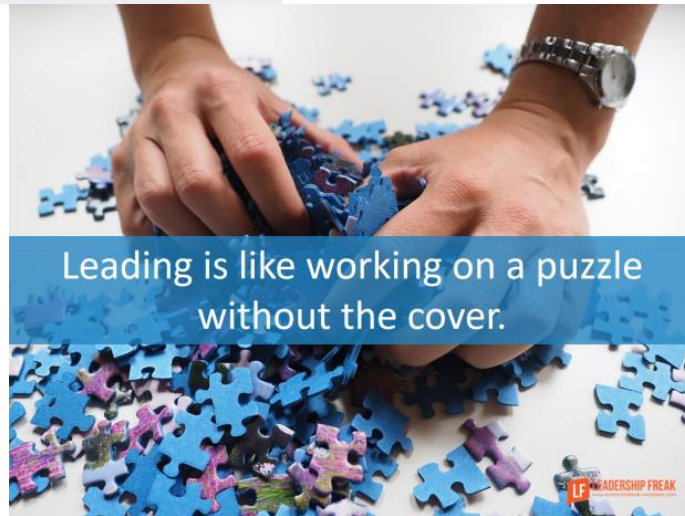
Surround yourself with true believers.

#3. Mentors, coaches, and the voice of experience.

Voices from the outside protect you from getting lost in the puzzle. No one knows the future, but a few have faced challenges similar to yours. Some are skilled at helping you find clarity.

You need someone to help you find your compass, not tell you what to do.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2017/05/15/the-puzzle-without-the-cover/>



Self Leadership—Challenging Assumed Constraints

The negative, almost nasty, comment to one of my LinkedIn posts bugged me. I spent 30 minutes formulating a clever response and then, another 30 minutes trying to figure out how to post it. I could see the man's comment in my notifications, but when I clicked "check it out" or "join the conversation," I couldn't find his comment. In pure frustration, I reached out for help from my Millennial social media guru, Kristin.

Her email back to me: *You clicked the correct links to respond. I checked the links as well, and I also logged into your profile to look for the comment notification. It appears that he deleted his comment!*

She had come to a plausible conclusion that I hadn't even considered! I am supposed to be a subject matter expert on self leadership, yet I fell prey to an assumed constraint. I held an assumption that I was woefully ignorant when it comes to social media and incapable of solving the problem. I let that belief limit my openness to another possibility—such as, the man deleted his comment.

We fall prey to insidious assumed constraints every day. The way we internalize facts influences our beliefs that shape our intentions, which ultimately leads to our behavior.

Virtually raise your hand if your manager makes more money than you do. Nod your head knowingly if your manager has more position power than you do. Now consider how these facts influence your beliefs about the workplace, shape your intentions, and ultimately determine your behavior—and your relationship with your manager.

- Comparing my manager's power and income to my own, I may conclude: *I don't have the power or ability to affect change*. This belief leads me to watch painfully as changes happen to me without my input or participation.
- I may believe that my manager should know when I need more direction for achieving my goal. This belief causes me to wait for her to provide me with an action plan and the resources I need.
- Even sadder, maybe I believe my boss should know what I need, but is so self-absorbed, she doesn't even notice. This belief leads me to resent my manager and sabotage the relationship

because I don't trust she has my best interests at heart.

Assumed constraints are beliefs that limit our experience. Self leadership demands the acknowledgement, exploration, and reframing of assumed constraints.

Challenging assumed constraints by flipping them into statements that lead to positive action is an essential mindset of a self leader. For example, what

if I took the assumed constraint about power and flipped it? *I believe I have the power and ability to affect change*. This statement is more likely to lead to productive behavior, such as proactive problem solving or selling my solutions.

The flipped assumed constraint also leads to an exploration of

power: What types of power do I have and how can I use my points of power to proactively achieve my goals and make greater contributions to others?

Research provides evidence that self leadership competencies can be learned—and that organizations would be better served by focusing budgets and training employees on self leadership. But learning the skillset also requires cultivating a mindset to challenge assumed constraints, activate your points of power, and be proactive.

Thinking about my assumed constraint for responding to comments on LinkedIn, I take heart that I proactively reached out to a subject matter expert using my relationship power. I feel confident that the next time I find myself frustrated over social media (probably sometime within the next hour or so), I will challenge my assumed constraints by mindfully exploring solutions I wouldn't have considered before receiving Kristin's insight. Then, if I really am stymied, I will reach out for direction and support.

Self Leadership is having the mindset and skillset for getting what you need to succeed. For true self leaders, accepting responsibility and taking initiative for the quality of your work and life experience is a continuous pursuit of learning, growing, and achieving. It is the saga that never ends.

About the Author

Susan Fowler is a senior consulting partner with The Ken Blanchard Companies and the coauthor of Blanchard's new *Self Leadership program*. You can learn more about Susan and The Ken Blanchard Companies at <http://www.kenblanchard.com>





Full-Day Pre-Retirement Training Seminar-2017



Be sure you are financially prepared to do all the things you've planned for your retirement!!



CSRS session topics:

- Overview of CSRS
- Survivor Benefit
- Thrift Savings Plan (to include Roth TSP)
- Voluntary Contribution Program
- Federal Employee Health & Life Insurance Programs
- Social Security
- Federal Long Term Care Program
- Flexible Spending Accounts
- Annuity Calculation
- Phased Retirement

FERS session topics:

- Overview of FERS
- Survivor Benefit
- Thrift Savings Plan (to include Roth TSP)
- Federal Long Term Care Program
- Federal Employee Health & Life Insurance Programs
- Social Security
- Flexible Spending Accounts
- Annuity Calculation
- Phased Retirement

DATE: Wednesday and Thursday, August 16 and 17, 2017 (select which system)
TIME: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Registration will begin at 7:30 am
LOCATION: Leland Federal Bldg, 1919 Smith Street, Houston
COST: \$65.00 per person to cover expenses
INSTRUCTOR: Instructor is compensated by First Command, these sessions are educational ONLY. Instructor holds neither license nor affiliation with any financial products.

[] Sign me up for the CSRS Only session on Wednesday, August 16, 2017

[] I am covered by a special retirement provision (Firefighter/Law Enforcement/Air Traffic Controller)

[] Sign me up for the FERS Only session on Thursday, August 17, 2017

[] I am covered by a special retirement provision (Firefighter/Law Enforcement/Air Traffic Controller)

[] I wish to sign up my spouse to attend at the reduced fee of \$50.00

Seating is limited to 75 per session

Payment must be made in advance [] Check [] Credit Card—Phone #:

NAME(S): _____

Spouses are welcome to register, as well, at a reduced fee of \$50.00 for the registration fee.

AGENCY: _____

Please list your agency, organization and office symbol.

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: () _____ EMAIL: () _____

Email to: Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov

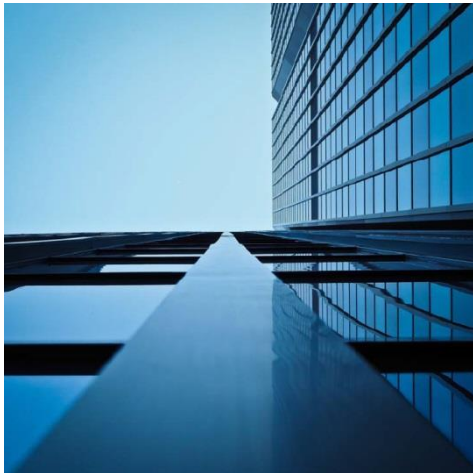
Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, refunds and cancellations will be permitted through August 10, 2017. However, after that date, registrations must be honored by the individual or agency involved. If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!



INTERAGENCY SECURITY COMMITTEE PHASE II



Date:	Thursday, December 7, 2017
Location:	Leland Federal Building, 1919 Smith St., Houston
Time:	8:00am-12:30pm
Cost:	No fee
Who should attend:	Federal Agency Leaders, Facility Security Committee (FSC) members and those involved in making facility funding, leasing, security, or other risk management decisions.



Risk Management Process and Facility Security Committee Training

Last year, in the first phase of the National Compliance Advisory Initiative, the ISC provided awareness training in 19 cities across the country. Building off that foundation, as part of Phase Two, this four-hour, instructor-led, training course includes an in-depth look at the Risk Management Process and Facility Security Committee membership. The course is offered at no cost to participants and is available at a first come, first served basis.

Receive FSC Training Credits: Successful completion of this training will meet the FSC training requirements, as the material in the course matches the material presented in the online ISC training courses. This course also acts as prerequisite training for the 3-day RMP course, hosted by OPM.

Executive Core Qualifications: Leading Change, Leading People, Results Driven, Business Acumen, Building Coalitions

REGISTRATION

Name:	Phone:
Agency:	City:
Email:	

Email registration to:	Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov
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Cancellation Policy: If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged if within the appropriate management structure!